



For Immediate Release

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Community Awareness and Cooperation Key to Preventing Arson

May 2-8 Arson Awareness Week

JACKSON – Nearly 300 fires investigated by the Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office between May 1, 2009 and May 1, 2010, were the result of arson. Of those fires on record, State Fire Marshal investigators have made 111 arrests, including the high profile case in Warren County where one individual was charged with and has been indicted on multiple counts of arson.

In addition to needless injury and death, an estimated \$1.1 billion in direct property loss occurs annually as a result of arson in the United States. During May 2-8, 2010, National Arson Awareness Week, State Fire Marshal and Commissioner of Insurance Mike Chaney urges all Mississippians to become more informed about arson prevention. The theme of this year's Arson Awareness week is Community Arson Prevention.

"Working together with your neighbor or in your community is key. A Community Arson Watch program can put the neighbor back into neighborhood by creating a sense of cooperation," Chaney said.

"It brings the fire service, law enforcement, and citizens together to reduce the crime of arson. Arson robs communities of their valuable assets, lives and property and can result in rising insurance premiums."

Neighborhoods can reduce the likelihood of arson occurring by promoting neighborhood watches, educating people about recognizing and reporting unusual activities, and implementing improved internal and external security for homes and businesses.

The State Fire Marshal's Arson Reward Program offers cash rewards of up to \$1,000 for hot tips or information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person responsible for the willful destruction by fire or explosion of any real or personal property within the State of Mississippi. Anyone with a tip can contact the State Fire Marshal's Office at (601)359-1061, or 1-888-648-0877, or may contact their local sheriff.

Listed below are some tips to reduce the chances that you may become a victim of arson. External and internal security such as locks, alarms, and monitoring equipment can deter an arsonist. Arsonists, like burglars, fear light. Be sure to have sufficient lighting. Do not provide cover for the arsonists. Get involved with community awareness and watch programs.

- Secure and monitor unoccupied and abandoned buildings.
- Remove trash, debris, and other combustible materials from the front and back of your business or home.
- Remove flammable materials and chemicals from your home.
- Securely store flammable materials and chemicals necessary for use in your business.
- Lock your doors and windows.
- Report suspicious people and activity to law enforcement officials.
- Support local Neighborhood Watch programs.
- Illuminate the exterior and entrances.
- Keep dumpsters at least 10 feet away from buildings and roof overhangs. Make sure all discarded materials are placed inside the containers and padlock them after school hours.
- Lock and secure your vehicle.

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